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by L. B. TAYLOR, JR.

Mac (rt.) receives medal in
Banska Bystrica ceremony.



O.S.S. MISSION

RAW, SUB-FREEZING WINDS, whipping off the mountainside, bit hard into First Lieutenant William Alan McGregor's flesh. Bone-deep shivers literally rattled his teeth. It was 20 degrees outside, and the only thing that kept Mac from collapsing in utter exhaustion from the cruel exposure were two razor-sharp bayonet points, one aimed at his belly and the other at his buttocks.

Nazi sentries kept a constant guard over the freezing McGregor.

He was standing at attention in the shin-deep snow, dressed only in long johns and boots; and when he relaxed for even a second, the ice-crusted bayonets prodded him back to his rigid stance.

Mac's entire body suffered as each gusty blast of the bitter, wintry wind whistled through the threadbare apparel, turning his goosepimp skin a deeper shade of purplish-blue. The lieutenant shifted his weight from one foot to the other as best he could without drawing the guard's attention, but he already felt the circulation stopping and the numbing frostbite setting in.

This would be a helluva way to go after all I've been through," Mac told himself. "How long can they keep me out here in this blizzard?"

He could think of nothing he would like better than to wrap his arms around himself, clasp them tightly against his shivering body, and hopping up and down until some small amount of body warmth could be restored to his aching bones. But there was no chance of this with the guards breathing down his neck.

He stood there, a human icicle, immobile and frozen. Sheer anger kept him from falling into the bayonets. He was more mad than scared—mad at the physical beating from the biting winds.

"You dirty bastards," he muttered under his heavy winter overcoats with thick woolen scarves wrapped around their necks. "I wonder how long you would last in your longies out here."

After a solid hour of standing practically naked in the bone-chilling cold, the guards ordered McGregor back into the medieval-looking castle, near Homberg, that served as a German interrogation center in January, 1945. He could barely move his legs. They felt like two petrified stumps, but the sharp bayonet jabs forced him to hobble forward as best he could.

Inside, he was greeted by the notorious "Mad Major," a fanatical Bavarian Prussian known only by his nickname, a conscienceless Nazi who proudly boasted that the British had put a \$10,000 price tag on his head for inhuman torture of Allied troops. It hadn't taken Mac long to learn how the psychopath had earned his nickname.

"Did you enjoy the fresh air out there, Lieutenant?" he asked, a sadistic smile curling his lips. "Invigorating, wasn't it?" he queried, striking a match to light his pipe. He took a few long draws, watched the smoke curl upward, and inquired, "Are you ready to talk now?"

The Nazis had McGregor's O.S.S. credentials—tantamount to a death sentence. They'd question him, then torture him and, finally, they'd put him in front of a firing squad!